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*The Duty of Obedience to the Laws and of
Submission to Magistrates.*

A
S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY

THE LATE DISTURBANCES

IN THE

NORTH OF *IRELAND*,

PREACHED BEFORE THE JUDGES OF ASSIZE

In the Cathedral Church of ARMAGH,

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BY THE REVEREND
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St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, chap. iii. ver. 1.

Put them in mind to be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates, to be ready to every good Work.

IT is observable that the first and greatest Enemies of our holy Religion endeavoured to suppress its rise and stop its progress, when other methods failed, by representing its Divine Author and his Followers, as persons who paid no regard to the Laws and Rulers of the State, and who claimed to themselves a Power independent of the civil Government. Thus the Jewish Priests accused our Lord of *forbidding them to give Tribute to Cesar, saying, that He himself was Christ, a King*^a, and therefore, said they to Pilate, *if you let this man go you are not Cesar's friend*^b. St. Paul was also accused before Felix the Governor; as *a pestilent Fellow, a Mover of Sedition throughout the World, and a Ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes*^c. At Thessalonica the unbelieving Jews brought a

^a Luke xxiii. 2.

^b John xix. 12.

^c Acts xxiv. 5.

Charge against St. Paul and the Brethren before the Rulers of the City, That *they went about to turn the world upside down, and did contrary to the Decrees of Cesar, saying, there was another King, one Jesus*^d.

BUT the first Preachers of Christianity soon refuted these false aspersions by their Doctrine and their Example; and thereby removed from the minds of the People those prejudices which must otherwise have prevented them from embracing the Gospel. For the rights and advantages of civil Society are so valuable to mankind, and depend so entirely on good Government and Order, that men are naturally averse to any Set of People, or to any Doctrines that have a Tendency to sow the seeds of Discord and Rebellion; and it cannot be supposed that any Prince would ever have received the Christian Faith while He suspected that it gave the least Countenance to Sedition and Licentiousness.

IT was therefore on this account, as well as on others, that the Apostles so earnestly exhorted men every where to pay a due Submission to the Laws and the Governors under which they lived; and command that *Supplications and Prayers should be offered up for Kings and for all that are*

^d Acts xvii. 7.

put in Authority, that under them we may lead a quiet life in all Godliness and Honesty°. This seems to have been a favourite Topic of St. Paul's, who enters very particularly into the grounds of Civil Authority and the obedience due to it ; and charges his beloved Titus, whom he left to supply his place in Crete, that he should frequently remind the People of what they had before learned from Him ; for so his words in the Text seem to imply. *Put them in mind*, says he, *to be subject to Principalities and Powers, to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to every good Work*. Which words contain directions both to the Ministers of God's word what they are to teach, and to the People what they are to observe and do.

I SHALL therefore, as my Duty requires on this Occasion, lay before you the nature and extent of that obligation which we all lie under to be amenable to the Laws, and to yield a peaceable Submission to our Governors. I shall then represent to you the many and great Calamities which must arise in every State where the People attempt to shake off the due Subordination to their Magistrates, and set themselves up as the only Judges of what Laws are proper to be executed and what are not. And in doing this I

° 1 Tim. ii. 2.

shall take occasion to consider those Pretences by which self-willed and presumptuous Persons have endeavoured to justify their seditious conduct. That seeing the folly and wickedness of their Proceedings, you may, thro' God's Assistance and your own good Resolutions, be preserved from ever *following a Multitude to do Evil*^f.

THAT all Persons are strictly bound to pay obedience to the Laws of that Society of which they are members, is a point so clear both from Reason and from the holy Scriptures, that one would hardly imagine any doubt could be entertained about it. And yet there is too much reason to fear, that many People, who acknowledge their indispensable obligation to observe all the *divine* Laws, have but very loose and unsettled notions of the Authority of the civil Magistrate, and of those Laws which they consider as merely of human institution, and which they do not see to be enjoined in express Terms in the word of God. Such persons often argue themselves into a persuasion, that as the positive Laws of the Land were ordained by frail and fallible men, and may therefore be in some cases imperfect and inconvenient, they may venture with a safe conscience to transgress them; and

^f Exod. xxiii. 2.

imagine that if they can escape with impunity from the Civil Power, God will take no account of their Offence, or punish them hereafter for their Disobedience. This, of all Persuasions or Principles, is the most destructive to society, as it deprives the State of that aid and support it derives from Religion, and without which it cannot subsist. I shall therefore shew you that the Laws and Ordinances of every civilized State, wherein nothing is enjoined contrary to God's Word, or to the natural Rights of Mankind, have the full Sanction of the divine authority, and that a peaceable and conscientious Submission to them is a religious Duty in the strictest sense. And this may be fully proved from the Example and the Precepts of our blessed Lord and his Apostles.

OUR Saviour commanded the Jews to pay their Tribute and *to render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's*, as well as *unto God the things which are God's*^s. When he was called upon for his own Tribute, which was to be paid for the service of the Temple, tho' he shewed St. Peter, that as Lord of the Temple he was by no means obliged to pay it, yet rather than give any offence to the civil Power he wrought a miracle to pro-

^s Matthew xxii. 21.

vide the means of payment, and such a miracle as shewed that all nature was tributary to him. When a certain man requested that our Lord would *Speak to his Brother to divide the Inheritance with him*, His answer was, *Man, who made me a Judge or a Divider over you^b?* Here we see that the great King of Kings would not interpose his Authority in a case which it was the Office of the civil Magistrate to determine; from whence we are taught that no man should presume to take that Office upon him, who is not regularly appointed to it by the Laws of the Society. In short, our Saviour, in his whole conduct, shewed the greatest Deference to the Laws of the State, and to those who were intrusted with the execution of them, therein *leaving us an example that we should follow his stepsⁱ.*

If we now consider the Behaviour and the Doctrine of the Apostles, we shall find they correspond exactly with that of their divine Master. St. Paul enters largely into the nature and design of civil Government and of the obedience we are obliged to pay to our Rulers, and declares the reasons on which that obligation is founded, and shews the danger of refusing to

^b Luke xii. 14.

ⁱ 1 Pet. ii. 21.

comply

comply with it. *Let every soul, says He, be subject to the higher Powers, for there is no Power but of God; the Powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation*^k. Which words plainly imply that civil Government is of God's own appointing, who knows it to be necessary for the well-being of his creatures; and will therefore severely punish the impiety of those who shall dare to disturb that Government, or resist the Magistrate in the execution of his necessary office.

He then informs us what the Office of a Magistrate is; that, *he is the Minister of God to thee for Good; but if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain, for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth Evil*. And then he adds; *Wherefore you must needs be subject not only for wrath but for Conscience sake*^l. That is, you must be amenable to the Magistrates in the execution of the Laws, not only for fear of their Wrath, or of the Punishment they may inflict on the disobedient, but also that you may preserve a conscience void of offence towards God as well as towards Man. He then concludes

^k Rom. xiii. 1, 2.

^l Rom. xiii. 4, 6, 7.

this Subject with observing, that, *for this cause pay you Tribute also, for they are God's Ministers attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.* The reasoning in these words and the Duty they enjoin are very evident. The Rulers, says He, attend continually on this very thing, that is, on protecting the Innocent, punishing the Evil-doers, and preserving Peace and good Order in Society; therefore you are at all times readily and chearfully to pay all such Tributes or Taxes as are found necessary for the support of Government and for the service of the Public, and to shew all that Subjection and Reverence to your Rulers, which the Laws of God or Man have given them a right to.

THIS is St. Paul's account of the Authority of human Governments, and of the Submission due to them from their Subjects. And St. Peter delivers the same Doctrine, almost in the same words: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of Man, for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as supreme, or unto Governors as unto them that are sent by Him for the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well. As free, and not using your Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciousness,*

ness, but as the Servants of God. Honour all Men, love the Brotherhood, fear God, honour the King^m. Here we may observe, that though St. Peter calls the several Forms of Government and the Laws of particular Societies, *the Ordinance of Man*, because they are agreed upon and administered by Men; yet he requires Submission to them *for the Lord's sake*, because their Authority is originally derived from God, who has given them his own Sanction, and thereby made them his Ordinance.

THOUGH these Precepts of Obedience and Submission are expressed without any limitation, yet they are not to be taken in so strict a sense as that any thing may be inferred from them, which would be inconsistent with the Security and Happiness of Society; which St. Paul plainly supposes to be the great end of Government, and the sole purpose for which Magistrates are appointed. Therefore they cannot be extended so far as to preclude any Nation, that labours under the Yoke of Tyranny and Oppression, from endeavouring, by all prudent and effectual means, to render their Government more favourable to the happiness of the Public; for no doubt Religion will countenance what-

^m 1 Peter ii. 13—17.

ever measures Prudence dictates for so good a Purpose. We may therefore understand these Precepts of the Apostles in the same manner we do those of our Saviour, where He says ; *whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloke also* ⁿ. By which he certainly did not mean that Christians should never defend themselves against any violence or injustice, but what he meant was to forbid, in the strongest Terms, that Spirit of Revenge and Litigiousness in which People are too apt to indulge themselves to their own Harm and Loss. Just so may we suppose that the Apostles, by those Precepts, meant to restrain men, in the strictest manner, from that petulant and perverse opposition to Laws and to Magistrates, that private Persons are often led into by their own presumption and obstinacy ; and indeed to restrain them from every sort of Opposition to Governors, except only when it may happen in some very extraordinary Case that the Evils and Distresses arising to the Society from submission are as certain and are evidently greater than those that must follow from disobedience. In this sense these apostolical Precepts are particularly

ⁿ Matthew V. 39, 40.

applicable to the present occasion, and therefore in this sense I mean they should be applied in my present Discourse.

FROM what has been said you must surely be convinced that human Laws and Constitutions, when not contrary to God's word or the natural Rights of Mankind, are so confirmed by him as to become binding on the conscience of Men, and that your obedience to them is a duty as strictly enjoined as any other religious duty whatever. And a moment's reflection will shew you the great Wisdom and Goodness of Almighty God in thus interposing his own Authority for so excellent a purpose; for Government and Subordination is so absolutely necessary, that there would be no living in peace or security without it. Were there no Kings or Magistrates to protect the Innocent and restrain Evil-doers, or (which is the same thing) were they not obeyed in the execution of their Office; the world would be filled with Violence and Oppression; there would be no grounds for mutual confidence or commerce among Men, no security for any thing we enjoy, but our lives and properties would be exposed to perpetual Dangers. And therefore, since the happiness of Society is the peculiar care of God's providence, he has declared Government to be of his own appointing,

appointing, and challenges to Himself the protection and support of it. *By me Kings reign, says He, and Princes decree Justice; by me Princes rule, and Nobles, even all the Judges of the Earth*°. Now can any Man, who knows all this, pretend that he hath the least regard to Religion or Conscience, if it has not a proper Influence on his Practice in enforcing a due Submission to the Laws of his Country? and if it has not this Influence, can He expect to be considered otherwise than as a designing hypocrite, who means Injustice to his Neighbour, and would willingly sacrifice the Peace and Safety of the Public to his own private advantage?

HAVING now fully proved it to be God's Will, that Men should every where, under the pain of his Displeasure, pay a dutiful Obedience to the Laws of their Country, and submit themselves peaceably to the King and all that are put in Authority under him, I shall lay before you some very strong and peculiar Obligations which we of these Kingdoms lie under to the strict observance of this important Duty. And that you may perceive how highly criminal any Licentiousness or Sedition among us must appear in the sight of God, I shall represent to you some of the many and great advantages

° Prov. viii. 15.

we enjoy above other Nations, and which are now, under Providence, secured to us by a Prince whose known regard for the Constitution of his Kingdoms, and whose firm and conscientious adherence to the Laws, must render any disobedience in his Subjects quite inexcusable.

OUR Civil Constitution was from the first founded on the Liberty of the People, which all our laws are contrived to support and protect. Our form of Government is happily placed between the two extremes of arbitrary Power and popular Licentiousness. Our Magistrates, from the highest to the lowest, are bound to execute their Office according to known Laws, to which all orders of Men have given their consent either by themselves or their Representatives; and the meanest Subject who finds himself aggrieved has a legal opportunity of procuring Redress against the highest Officer of the State, should he exceed the bounds of his Commission. So that the People are secured in the Power of doing whatever the Law permits, and of not being compelled to do what the Law does not require; in which the true nature of Personal Liberty consists. Our Property is so carefully guarded by the Constitution, that no national Tax is even proposed but
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by the Representatives of the People. And every particular or local Tax is imposed only by such Persons of the Neighbourhood as must be the best Judges of the necessity of that Tax, and the Abilities of those who are to pay it, and who must themselves bear a considerable part of it. Add to this, that great and singular Privilege which every Subject of this Kingdom enjoys, of being tried and adjudged by his Equals ; by those who being in the same rank of life, and having the same Interests with himself, are most likely to give Judgment with justice and tenderness. And these are appointed in such manner as leaves no room for fraud or prejudice, and are so far liable to the refusal of the Party, whose life or property is in question, that those he does not refuse may justly be esteemed his own choice. What greater Security can a man possibly have for his Life or his Property, than that neither of them can be affected but by a mode of trial so fair and equitable ? And then, that the Administration of our wholesome Laws may freely circulate through the extreme parts of the Community ; THESE VENERABLE MAGISTRATES, by their regular progress throughout the Land, bring the Courts of Justice home to our doors, and save us all the delay, expence, and other inconveniencies that must attend our being obliged to seek for Justice at the Capital only.

only. But to display the excellence of our happy Constitution fully is not my present design, nor indeed have I either abilities or time to treat so extensive a subject as it deserves; I have therefore but slightly touched on some of the Outlines of this beautiful System of Government, which has been raised and improved by the wisdom of ages, and is now envied and admired by all nations; so that I may justly appeal to you in the words of Moses, and ask, *what nation is there so great, that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous as all* this Law which I set before you this day* ?

CONSIDER now, I beseech you, that to whom God *has given much, of them will He require the more*^q. And as He hath given you these great and national Blessings, He will certainly require, that you shew yourselves not unworthy of his Gifts, by a proper use and improvement of them; and by a conscientious discharge of every branch of your duty to Him and to those He has set over you; and that you be ready at all times to aid and assist your Governors, according to your several stations and abilities, in promoting Peace and good Order, Unanimity and Justice among your Fellow-citizens; and in restraining all those that attempt to raise seditious

^p Deut. iv. 8.

^q Luke xii. 48.

Insurrections, or oppose the Laws. For be assured it is from such Conduct only, you can reasonably hope that Almighty God will be graciously pleased to continue to you and your posterity those Blessings you now enjoy above other Nations.

HAVING shewn you the nature of that Submission and Obedience which the People are obliged, by the Laws of God and Man, to pay to those who are set in authority over them ; I come now to represent to you, as I proposed in the second place, the Mischiefs and Calamities that must arise, should the People, in a free and well-ordered Government as ours is, attempt, on any pretence whatever, to shake off the due Subordination to their Magistrates, and set themselves up as the only judges of what Laws are proper to be executed and what are to be opposed. Wherever a factious and turbulent spirit carries People to such lengths ; it is plain, that instead of Peace and Good-will among Men, nothing will prevail but Discord, Hatred, and Distrust, and that instead of honest Industry and gainful, flourishing Manufactures, Debauchery, Idleness and Beggary will ensue ; and instead of being secure in our Properties and Lives, we must expect injurious Violation of Property, and outrageous Riots often ending in Murder. In short, so many Blessings
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are lost and so many Evils are incurred by such an Event, that a reasonable man cannot but wonder how any People could suffer such a dangerous Spirit ever to arise among them.

AND yet we may suppose that the Persons who seem to have been influenced by that Spirit on a late occasion, must have fancied there were some Reasons that might justify their Conduct in the sight of God ; or they could not have ventured to be guilty of such Actions as they knew would draw down upon them the immediate resentment of the civil Power. Therefore it may not be amiss to consider by what reasons or pretences People have been thus deceived, and to examine whether they can possibly justify such proceedings as we have heard of. For if any of the Persons concerned therein should, on this occasion, be among my Hearers, I would wish of all things to convince them of their Errors, that they might sin no more in the like sort.

IT is said many Complaints have been made, that those whom God has blessed with landed property, often make such exorbitant Demands for the use of their Lands, as will not allow the industrious man who tills the Ground to reap a reasonable Profit by his Labour ; which is represented as a very great Grievance and Oppression.

As to this matter I must observe, that nothing can be more difficult than to judge fairly where such complaints are well founded and where they are not. For it is evident, that as the People increase in number and grow more skilful in Agriculture, as our Manufactures flourish and are extended, and as the Country is improved ; all these most desirable Events will necessarily produce a proportional Increase in the Value of our Lands ; and the person who occupies the Ground will receive a higher price for whatever it produces. So that the Rise of Land cannot be, in itself, a Grievance. And therefore People ought to think very seriously before they allow themselves to be influenced by such Complaints, and especially as they may be led from thence to take most unjustifiable steps for redressing what they imagine to be a Grievance, and which may be only the necessary consequence of the national Improvement.

BUT still there may be some particular Instances in which this complaint is well founded. People may in some cases be obliged to pay more for their Land, than, all things considered, they ought to pay, and more than will afford them a sufficient maintenance for their families. Wherever this really happens, I do acknowledge it is a most grievous Oppression ; it is the very worst kind of Usury and Extortion. But then it is such Usury

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as the Law can neither prevent nor punish. Money has a determined value, and therefore the Interest of it may be fixed; but the Value of Land depends upon such a variety of Circumstances, and those of so uncertain a nature, that it can never be the subject of any general and settled Law. Therefore People are very absurd who would attempt to bring this under any fixed Regulations; and they are very wicked if they attempt to do it by Violence and Outrage. Every man's Land as well as his other Property must be left to the free disposal of his own Conscience, as he shall answer for it to God; and though he makes an improper or uncharitable use of it, still the Man who, on that account, uses Violence against him, or injures him in his Property, is the more guilty of the two: for Robbery is a more pernicious crime than Extortion.

BUT it may be asked, What then are poor People to do, when they labour under such hardship? I have already shewn you that it is impossible any human Laws or Regulations should afford them Redress; and that they are guilty of great wickedness in attempting to redress themselves, by rendering Evil for Evil. They must therefore trust to God's Providence, and comfort themselves with considering that where Land is over-rated, it must of necessity be again reduced

to its proper Price, by Time and the common Prices of other Things, which alone can bring this effect to pass. In the mean time they must use all the industry they are capable of, they must be sober, careful, and frugal; and before they complain of Oppression in others, they must be sure that their Distress does not arise rather from their own Idleness, Ignorance, or Drunkenness, which I fear is too often the case; for we have seen some People thrive under high Rents, and on the same Land where others, at low Rents, have been reduced to Beggary. But if with all their Industry, Care, and Frugality, they still find themselves unable comfortably to support their Families, on account of the high Demands made upon them; yet they must not be provoked to forget their Duty or transgress the Laws, for that would only make their Case worse; they must consider this as one of the Calamities of human life for which God has neither promised nor provided any immediate Remedy in this world; for, *it must needs be that Offences come, but Woe to that man by whom the Offence cometh*^r. Let them therefore take care that Offences do not come from their part, and let them commit their Cause to God, and by a *patient continuance in well-doing* look unto him for their Reward in a better Life. Let them observe St. Paul's directions, in the 12th

^r Matthew xviii. 7.

chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, where he says, *recompence to no man evil for evil; as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men. Dearly Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord*^a. Therefore in a Cause which God hath reserved to Himself, and will judge in his own good time, whoever will presume to *take the Sword shall perish with the Sword*^b. This, you may be well assured, is the only Advice, that, consistently with Reason or Religion, can be given to Persons in the Situation I have been speaking of; and no man, who does not throw off all regard to Religion as well as Reason, will ever think of using violence in such a Case, be his Complaint ever so well founded. And here I must admonish those, who are so apt to accuse their Superiors of oppression, to take care that they themselves are not guilty of greater oppression of the like kind towards their Inferiors; for I am persuaded it would be found, upon enquiry, that the intermediate Tenants, who take Land and retail it to others, are the Persons who have given the greatest occasion for complaints of this sort.

BUT there have been other matters talked of as Grievances, which I must also consider on this

^a Ver. 17—19.

^b Matthew xxvi. 52.

Occasion. It seems the People in some places have thought, that, by the Tax for public uses, the Laws put them to a greater expence than they could conveniently bear; and hence they concluded it was justifiable to resist the execution of the Law. Yet this very Tax is designed merely for their own particular Advantage, and so justly rated, that every one pays a part of it proportioned to his abilities, and the whole of it is laid out among those of them whose only support depends on their daily labour. And where this Tax is heavy, it can continue to be so only for a short time, as it will the sooner answer the good purpose for which it is intended, and then will grow lighter of course. One would think these circumstances might reconcile People even to some extraordinary expence; but I am sure no reasonable Men would ever seriously imagine that any such Inconvenience could possibly justify them in opposing the Law by force. Men ought to bear many things from their Benefactors which they will not bear from others: now he that resists the Laws, flies in the face of his best Benefactor, and is guilty of the highest ingratitude; for it is to the Laws that we owe the safety of our Lives and all that we have. And as a good Son will not lose the Respect due to an affectionate Parent, who may happen at times to be peevish and morose, so a good Subject will be sure

sure to preserve the reverence and respect due to the Laws, though in some particular Instance he thinks them inconvenient or severe. Besides, though the Laws were evidently intended for the Good of the whole Community, and were certainly framed by much wiser Heads than those who find fault with them, yet it is perhaps impossible in the nature of things that they should be always and every where so equitably administered, but that some People will feel, or pretend to feel, inconveniences from them. And if these People should be of so turbulent and unreasonable a Disposition as not to submit to some inconvenience for Peace sake and for the Good of Society, but think they have a right to oppose such Laws by force; see what must be the consequence. Others led by their Example would think they had an equal right to oppose such Laws as they disliked or fancied to be oppressive, there would be no end to the Grievances that would be complained of, and in a little time we should scarce have a single Law of the State that would not find its opposers. What a situation should we then be in? nothing but confusion and lawless force would every where prevail, no honest man would know how to conduct himself, for all regulations would depend on the uncertain Caprice of the Multitude, all Government and Peace would be at an end, and the most happy Constitution

tution that ever a Nation was blessed with would be entirely overturned.

You see then what dreadful Evils people may run into without considering what they are doing, and how greatly they are mistaken when they expect to obtain their Ends, by resisting the Laws, which can tend only to bring them into a worse situation than they were in before ; for certainly nothing has a greater tendency to force Magistrates into the practice of Tyranny or Oppression, than a continual fear for their own safety, and an experience, that they bear rule over a violent and obstinate People. So that disobedience constantly defeats its own purpose, and aggravates the grievance it pretends to remove ; and therefore they who attempt to redress themselves by Riots and Insurrections, are guilty of the worst policy that can be ; for while there is any Law or Government left in the Society, it must always prove too strong for such Insurgents, who will fall victims to their own imprudence, and meet with the same fate that Judas of Galilee did, who (as we read in the Acts of the Apostles) *rose up in the days of the Taxing and drew away much people after him ; he also perished, and all even as many as obeyed him were dispersed* ^u. In like manner all such rash and ungovernable people, in-

■ Chap. v. verse 37.

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stead of making their case better, will more probably bring desolation and famine upon their country, and will certainly involve themselves and their innocent families in all the miseries of banishment, and poverty.

AND yet even this is not the worst that is to be dreaded by those who allow themselves to be influenced by a spirit of sedition and discontent ; for nothing is so apt to lead them unawares into the commission of such horrid crimes, as, without the deepest repentance, must subject them to a much more dreadful punishment than any this world can inflict. When People of this unhappy Temper first get together, though perhaps they intend only to try whether they can carry their Point, by threats and by denouncing vengeance against those who refuse to submit to their Terms ; yet finding their numbers and strength increase, and seeing their threats disregarded, they are led on by the instigation of some desperate Spirits among them, from one Violence to another, till at length they are hurried into such Acts of Cruelty and Inhumanity as, at any other time, they would shudder to think of.

BUT further ; though the unruly and revengeful passions of men may often, on other occasions, lead them to commit the like acts of cruelty to
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their neighbours ; yet this spirit of seditious outrage has sometimes carried men to be guilty even of the most direct Impiety towards God himself : I mean, in that impious practice of compelling Persons, by violence and through fear of their Lives, to take Oaths contrary to their Conscience and to their Duty, and to bind themselves by the most sacred Tye to do that which is often injurious and unlawful. Now, could any popish Inquisition exercise a more cruel Tyranny over the Consciences and Souls of Men ? Could there be a viler Perversion of that solemn and religious Act, which God hath instituted for the *confirmation of Truth and to be an end of all Strife*^w ? Could there be a more wicked Profanation of the Gospel of Peace, than thus to use it as an Instrument in the hand of Violence ? endeavouring, as it were, to bring *Christ into a fellowship with Belial*^x. Or could a more daring Insult be offered to the awful Majesty of God, than to call Him among them, by this solemn appeal, to be a witness to their ungodly Deeds ? There is no speaking of this abominable crime without the utmost abhorrence ; it is such a one as will not admit of the least excuse from the suddenness or violence of any human Passion ; it was never heard of in other nations, but has been quite peculiar to the infatuated People of this country. I therefore think

^w Heb. vi, 16.

^x 2 Cor. vi. 15.

it highly necessary that it should be exposed to your view in its proper colours, that you may learn to abhor it as you ought ; for I am persuaded, that if these unhappy People had ever rightly considered the nature of this enormous offence, they would never have been guilty of it. Therefore I hope they will most sincerely repent of their misdoings, and that the Father of Mercies will forgive them, as they knew not what they did.

I HAVE now gone through what I proposed, and have shewn you what your duty is, and what dreadful effects must arise from disobedience and contempt of the Laws ; and herein I have taken up a portion of your time longer than usual, though not longer than the importance of my Subject required. I shall now briefly point out the use you are to make of what has been said. First, you are ever to retain in your minds a most thankful sense of the great Goodness and Wisdom of Almighty God, in having required, by his own supreme authority, and as a duty owing to himself, that all men should yield a ready and peaceable Obedience to the Government and Laws of their Country ; as by so doing, they most effectually consult their own security and happiness. Secondly, you are to consider, that the Laws are framed by those who, from their large share of Property, are most materially interested in the
Good

Good of the whole Society ; and whose extensive Knowledge and long Experience must render them much better Judges of what is for the general Advantage, than any particular Set of People can be, whose Views are so confined, that they seldom see farther than their own private concerns. This will shew you how very improbable it is that any real Grievances can arise from the due execution of the Laws, and that therefore you ought to be very cautious of entertaining any Complaints of that sort.

Lastly, what has been said, together with your Experience of what has happened, will fully convince you of the wickedness and folly of endeavouring to remove grievances, whether imaginary or real, by any unlawful means. As this will necessarily produce Evils, in comparison of which all such Grievances are but mere trifles. For attempts of this kind must be defeated, the unhappy offenders involved in ruin, and perhaps brought as Traitors to a shameful and untimely end.

BUT I trust in the Divine Providence, that these Disturbances are now at an end, that the timely interposition of our Governor has had its proper effect, and we are no longer in danger from such proceedings, of having this much improved country reduced to its former state of wretchedness and
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barbarity.

barbarity. It now remains only, that in behalf of those unhappy Offenders, we should all implore the Goodness of Almighty God, *who alone stilleth the raging of the Sea and the Madness of the People* ^r, to give them a due sense of their Errors, that they may never more glory in the *hardness of their Hearts, as in the Day of their Provocation* ^a, but turn unto the Lord, and with an humble and contrite Spirit beseech Him that their Sins may be forgiven, and that they may be counted worthy to partake of the gracious Promise He made to his People by the Prophet, saying, *I will put a new Spirit within them, I will take away their stony Hearts and give them Hearts of Flesh, that they may walk in my Statutes and keep mine Ordinances, and they shall be my People, and I will be their God* ^a.

AND in behalf of the same unhappy Persons, I must exhort you all, my Brethren, that, in your several Ranks and Stations, you be ready, not only to forgive all those that have injured or offended you, but to receive again into your favour and protection every one that shews true Repentance for what is past, and a hearty desire of returning to his Duty; that you will use all your Influence in promoting Reconciliation, Peace and Harmony among your Neighbours, and that you will be ready to listen patiently to such Complaints

^r Psalm lxxv. 7.

^a Psalm xciv. 8.

^a Ezekiel xi. 19, 20.

as are made known to you in a decent and dutiful manner; for thus you will be able to shew the People their Error, when they are mistaken, and to afford them every reasonable Assistance and Redress that their case may require. And by this kind Attention to them you will effectually convince them, that it is their Interest, as well as their Duty, *to be subject to Principalities, and Powers, to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to every good Work.*

Now the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good Work, to do his Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his Sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be Glory for ever and ever^b. Amen.

^b Hebrews xiii. 20, 21.

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